advocacy of privatization, pointing out that integrated water management is far more complex than managing a typical private sector enterprise. It went on to point out that the documents fail to make a distinction between the situation that applies to rural, as opposed to urban, water users in South Asia and many other regions and to take into account that rural water users in these regions have tiny landholdings, often as little as two hectares, and are generally illiterate.

These issues are similar to those that many water-resource professionals (including me) have been raising for many years. A major reason for failure to achieve adequate global and regional water management is that the donor community—including not only those that provide financing but also those that provide technical assistance, like the World Water Forum—is highly fragmented, with no one taking leadership to effect meaningful cooperation and determination of priorities.

I agree with the authors that what is presently needed is an institution—I prefer to call it a World Water Institute—that can exert such leadership. I also agree with the authors' choice of the World Bank, taking into account that the Bank, with its financial strength, is in the best position to see to it that covenants are enforced. In the past, the Bank has been reluctant to use this leverage, but it should begin to do so following precedents set by the IMF and the World Trade Organization.

Participation by the Bank would make use of its *comparative advantage*

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to deal with institutional development and overall policy and program implementation. To be successful, the Bank would need cooperation and joint participation with the United Nations and, of at least equal importance, strong financial and political support, especially from the United States.

NGOs, operating at the grassroots level in various regions, have been instrumental in establishing water user associations. An early task for the institute would be to create working relationships with the NGOs and to seek their cooperation in assisting governments in establishing water user associations on an accelerated basis. Another important task for the institute would be to make continuing studies of the scope for import by water-short countries of so-called virtual water in the form of grain. The imported grain would enable replacement of crops that consume large amounts of water—for example, rice and sugar cane—by high-value crops that consume less water, such as fruits and vegetables. Alternatively, the grain imports would provide a breathing space during which irrigation practices to conserve water could be introduced.

Concurrent actions would need attention in related fields, including education, especially for women; land reform; and family planning.

Phillip Kirpich
Retiree, World Bank
Miami Beach, Florida

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